

Leaving Room for God to give

Micah 6: 6 -8 ;

Luke 14: 8 -14.

O God, help us to listen to your Word with understanding, to receive it with faith, and to obey it with courage, for Jesus' sake. **Amen.**

Today is, of course, Palm Sunday, that day when we commemorate Christ's triumphal ride into Jerusalem, re-enacted this morning in Bunbury by a procession through the village, ably assisted by Murphy the donkey!

Christ turned the world order on its head, arriving, not in the full panoply of a conquering hero on a white charger, coming to take the city, but rather, riding on that most humble of beasts, a colt, the foal of a donkey. **And so he came in quiet humility as the crowds roared around him.**

So let us look for a few minutes at what that humility means for us today.

You have been invited to a birthday party. Not just any birthday party, but that of a successful, well heeled person.

Then the cry goes out. "What do you give a man (or woman) who has everything?"

All sorts of suggestions follow, geared to tempting the jaded appetite of someone who has too much.

Just last week I read in the Daily Mail, -so it must be true!- that Tamara Ecclestone, daughter of Formula One boss Bernie, and her husband have recently held a first birthday party for their daughter, Sophia.

And what did they do?

Not a few mums and their toddlers playing on the floor before consuming jelly and ice cream and singing Ring a ring a roses, no, their courtyard was turned into Sophia's very own petting zoo at a cost, we are told, of £70,000.

Poor Sophia, the sort of little girl who has designer shoes before she can walk. What chance does she have of ever living in the real world?

Writer Penelope Wilcock puts it: " Poverty still abounds, but our consumer society has created weariness and lassitude in those who have done everything and bought everything."

Jesus told the story of the wedding party. He warned the guest not to take the place of honour, but to humbly go further down the room. "For every one who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted".

The astringency of humility brings peace and relief. A simple, humble, frugal lifestyle invites quietness and contentment. When you no longer

worry that your house is smaller than your neighbours, or that your curtains are out of date, or you drive the wrong car. "Getting and spending, we lay waste our power."

Time spent in silence and solitude allows the soul to settle, making space for reflection.

Best of all, simplicity and humility make room once again for love, and the blessing of being able to receive from those who long to give.

For although we are taught "it is more blessed to give than to receive," it can actually be very challenging to have the humility to receive graciously.

The person who no longer has everything will regain the joy of eagerly awaited birthdays and Christmas when, once more, hand knitted scarves and gloves really **are** just what they wanted, and home -made fruit cake and a small truckle of good cheese are stored away in the larder as treasure.

To those who walk a quiet path, living in lowliness, comes the delight of unexpected recognition, the "Who, me?" of being acknowledged and rewarded. Like our wedding guest.

When you are on a low income, especially with small children, you have many more treats than the better off.

Then everything is precious.

A simple picnic in a beautiful park where the children can run around and be free while you absorb the peace and the landscape around you, can mean so much more than flying jaded, unappreciative spoilt kids off to Disneyland with the eye watering, wallet emptying, credit card loading, vacuous hype of someone else's idea of what fun should be.

One of the joys of humility is making room in your life to hope, to receive, to be delighted, allowing someone else the privilege of affirming you and not always having to be the one in charge.

And so a little story, from Aesop.

The North Wind and the sun.

The North Wind boasted of great strength. The Sun argued that there was great power in gentleness.

"We shall have a contest," said the Sun.

Far below, a man travelled a winding road. He was wearing a warm winter coat.

"As a test of strength," said the Sun, "Let us see which of us can take the coat off of that man."

"It will be quite simple for me to force him to remove his coat," bragged the Wind.

The Wind blew so hard, the birds clung to the trees. The world was filled with dust and leaves. But the harder the wind blew down the road, the tighter the shivering man clung to his coat.

Then, the Sun came out from behind a cloud. Sun warmed the air and the frosty ground. The man on the road unbuttoned his coat.

The sun grew slowly brighter and brighter.

Soon the man felt so hot, he took off his coat and sat down in a shady spot.

"How did you do that?" said the Wind.

"It was easy," said the Sun, "I lit the day. Through gentleness I got my way."

And in our spiritual life, let us be humble, be open to God, have time to be with him and to listen to what he is saying to us.

"And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

Pat Ellis